PLAIN · AND ORNAMENTAL LETTERING

A · Practical · Guide to · Ticket & Showcard Writing · Sign Writing and · other · forms · of Decorative Lettering

E. G. FOOKS

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ORNAMENTAL
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PLAIN AND ORNAMENTAL LETTERING

A Practical Guide to Ticket & Showcard Writing Sign Writing and other forms of Decorative Lettering

By

Edwin G. Fooks

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

EVERYTHING must have a beginning, and the art of lettering is no exception. Moreover, the beginning is usually a simple matter.

These two facts supply the key to this book. By commencing with the very simplest form of alphabet, even the beginner will quickly realize that good lettering is well within his power. As he gains confidence in his newly acquired skill, he will naturally look for some little elaboration; and the plates in the present book are arranged to foster this desire, by building up the alphabet along regular and progressive lines.

Underlying the whole book is the aim of making it essentially practical, and every plate has been chosen deliberately with this end in view; hence the inclusion of plates illustrating materials commonly required, and further plates suggesting simple types of ornament appropriate for use with the various forms of alphabet.

It is hoped that the amateur craftsman will here find ample practical guidance for any lettering which he may wish to undertake.

E. G. F.

CONTENTS

PLATE		PAGE
	Author's Preface	5
I.	Simplest Form of Alphabet, Based on Straight Lines and Circles (Upper-case)	9
II.	Simplest Form of Alphabet (Lower-case)	11
III.	The Chief Lettering Materials	13
IV.	A Thin Line Alphabet of Simple Form	15
V.	A Heavier Form of Alphabet than Plate IV	17
VI.	Lower-case Letters for use in conjunction with Upper-case Alphabets of Plates IV and V	19
VII.	Illustrating Variations in Thickness	21
VIII.	An Alphabet Introducing Thin and Thick Strokes and *Serifs*	23
IX.	A Variation of Plate VIII	25
X.	Lower-case Alphabet suitable for use in conjunction with Plate IX	27
XI.	Numerals	29
XII.	Illustrating Methods of Obtaining an Effect of Solidity	31
XIII.	Illustrating How a Solid Effect is Produced by Shading	33
XIV.	Some Useful Borders and Ornaments	35
XV.	The Trajan Alphabet	37
XVI.	Illustrating the Chief Points in the Construction of Trajan Capitals	39
XVII.	Pen-made Capitals Based on the Trajan Alphabet	41
XVIII.	A Less Formal Type of Trajan Alphabet	43
XIX.	A Lower-case Alphabet suitable for use in conjunction with Plates XV and XVIII	45
XX.	Caslon Type	47
XXI.	Italic Type	49

PLATE		PAGE
XXII.	Lower-case of Caslon type and Italic type, with Numerals suitable for use with either	51
XXIII.	Pen-made Capitals	53
XXIV.	Another Pen-made Alphabet	55
XXV.	Two Lower-case Alphabets for use with Capitals in Plates XXIII and XXIV respectively	57
XXVI.	The "Black Letter" Alphabet—a very Old Traditional Alphabet	59
XXVII.	Lower-case and Numerals suitable for use with Plate XXVI	61
XXVIII.	Borders, Ornaments, etc., made with a Broad Pen	63
XXIX.	Setting Out of Roman Letters Centrally	65
XXX.	Arrangement of Words in Inscriptions	67
XXXI.	Spacing of Letters	69
XXXII.	The Decorative Aspect of Lettering	71
XXXIII.	Sketches and Designs	73
XXXIV.	Some Everyday Objects Treated Simply and Ornamentally	75
XXXV.	Method of Lettering on (1) Curved Surfaces, (2) Receding Surfaces	77
XXXVI.	Stencilling	79
XXXVII.	Stencilled Ornaments and Borders	81
XXXVIII.	Gold Lettering	85
XXXIX.	A Convenient Alphabet for Rough Work	83
XL.	An Example of Trajan Lettering Applied to an Inscription	87

PLATE I

The simplest form of alphabet, based on straight lines and circles.

The letters fall into three groups—

(1) Letters roughly based on squares, slight deviations being indicated.

(2) Letters based on circles.

(3) Letters based on oblongs formed of two small squares.

This alphabet forms the fundamental basis for nearly all types of lettering. The beginner would do well to memorize the relative proportions of these capitals.

N.B.—Alternative forms of letters X, S (" running " S) and W are given.

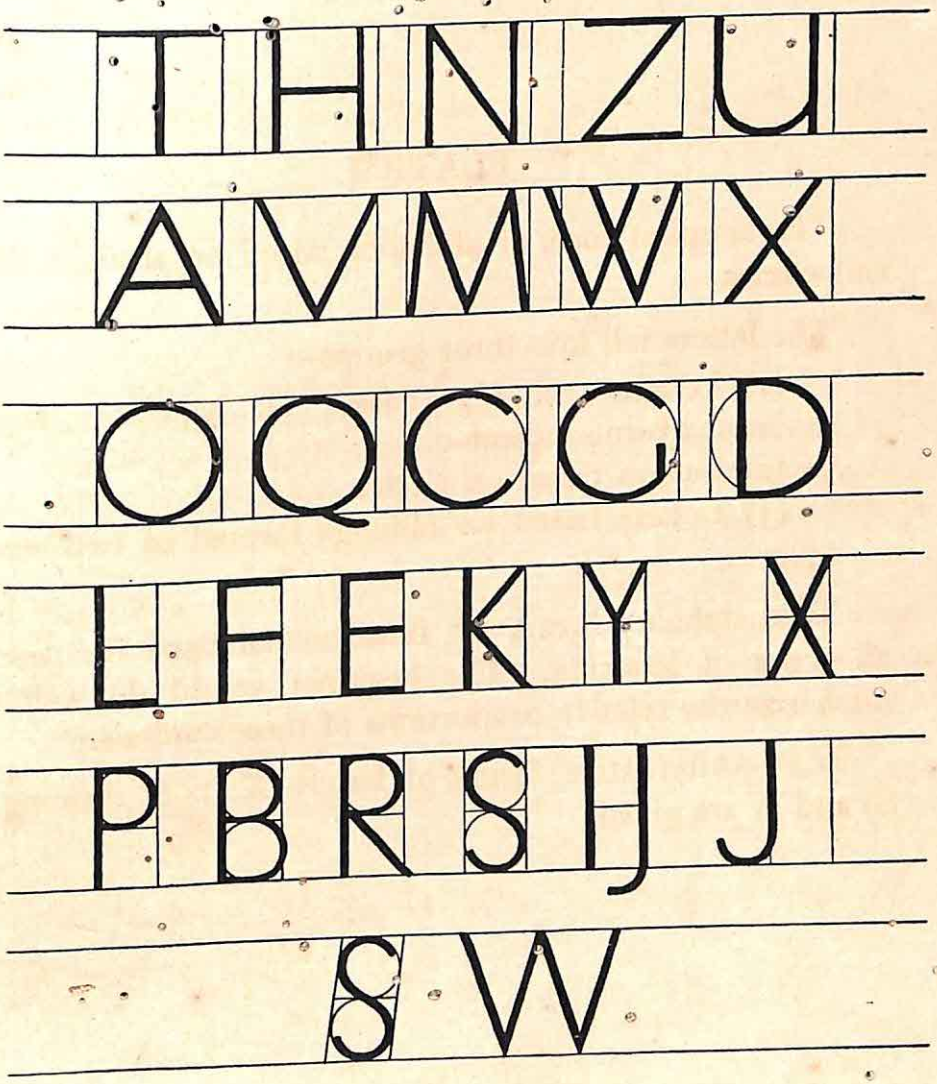


PLATE I

PLATE II

The simplest form of *lower-case* (or small letter) alphabet, corresponding to the *upper-case* (or capital letter) alphabet shown in Plate I.

These again are based on straight lines, circles, and parts of circles, and are grouped accordingly. As in the case of the capitals in the foregoing plate, the proportions should be memorized.

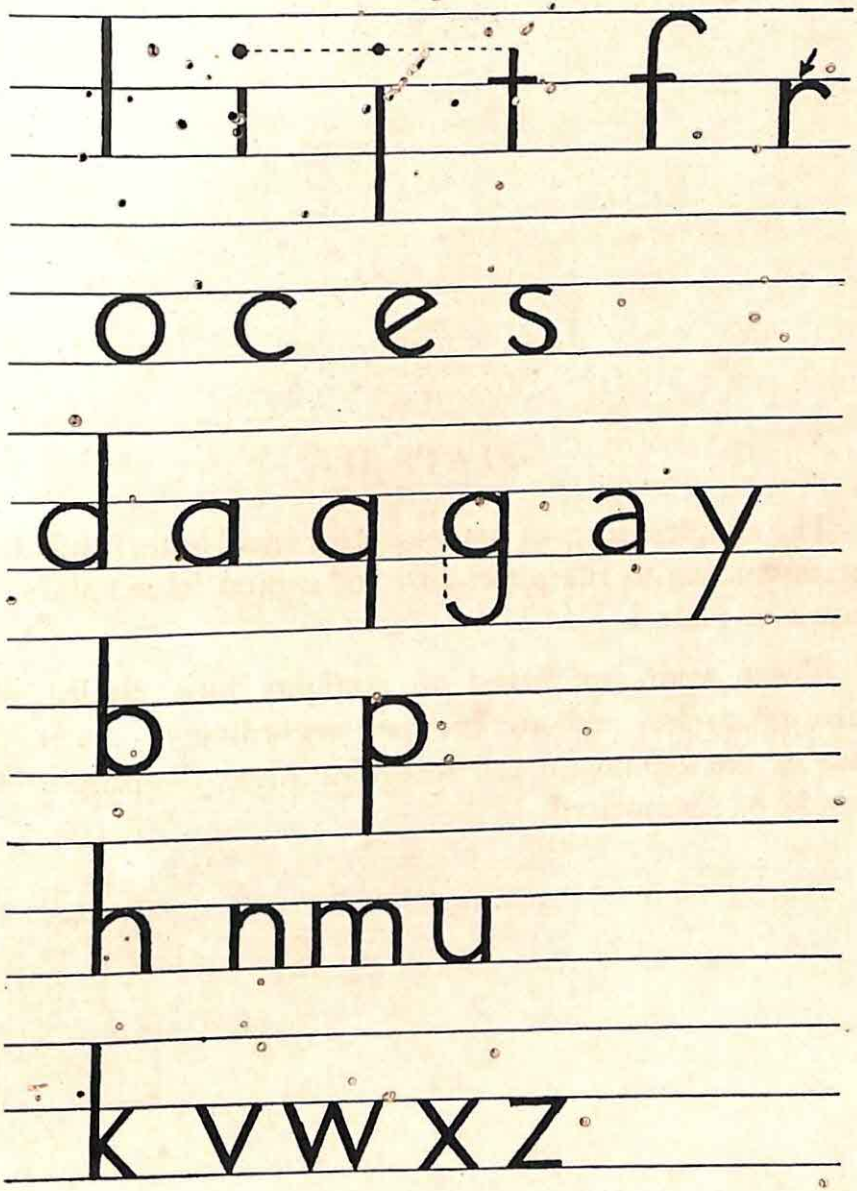


PLATE II

PLATE III

The chief materials commonly used in lettering, all of which can be obtained from any good artists' colourman.

The best medium for ordinary purposes is fixed Indian ink, supplied ready made in bottles.

The set square, in conjunction with the T-square, greatly facilitates the ruling of foundation and construction lines.

Two forms only of broad pen are illustrated, but there are others on the market.

For drawing ink-lines of varying thickness, the bow-pen is essential.

Any card with a hard, smooth surface can be used, although 'fashion' and 'Bristol' boards give the best results.

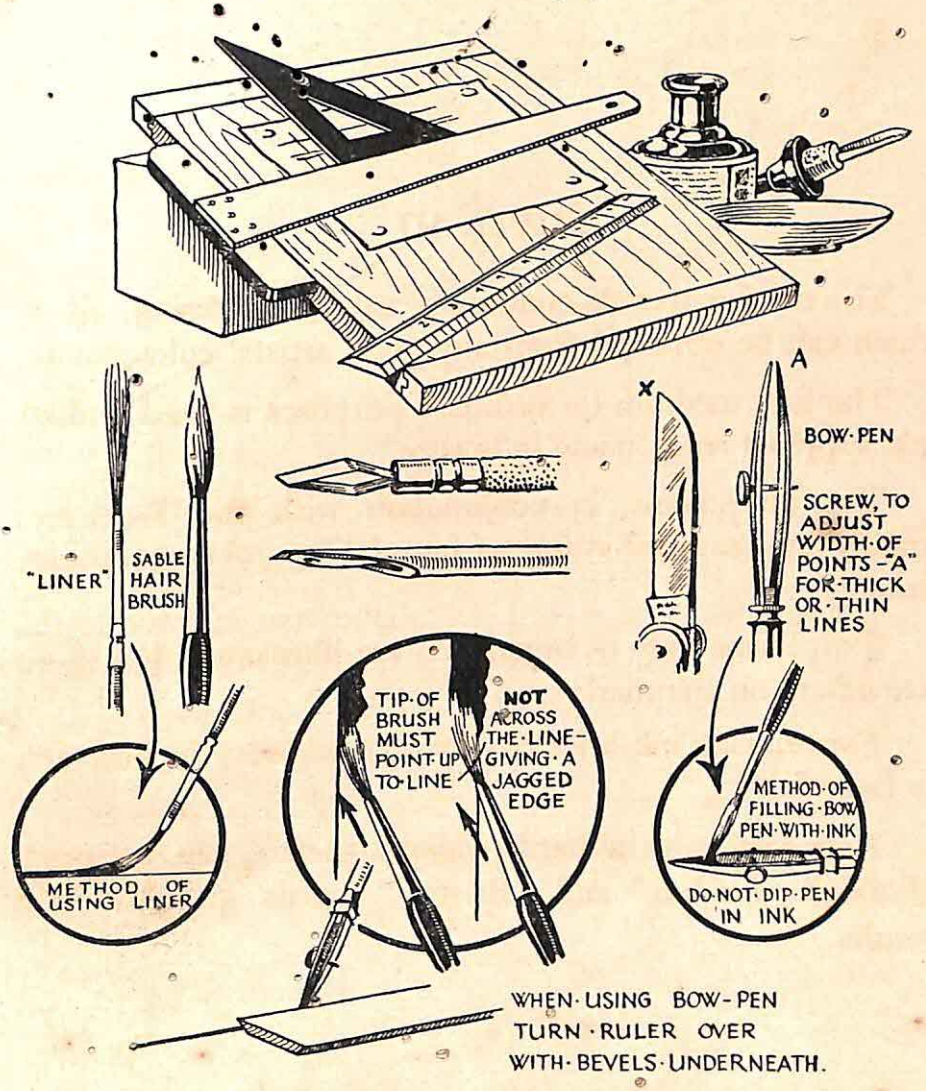

"LINER"
SABLE HAIR BRUSH
METHOD OF USING LINER
TIP·OF BRUSH MUST POINT·UP TO·LINE
NOT ACROSS THE·LINE– GIVING·A JAGGED EDGE
X
A
BOW·PEN
SCREW, TO ADJUST WIDTH·OF POINTS –"A" FOR·THICK OR·THIN LINES
METHOD·OF FILLING·BOW PEN·WITH·INK
DO·NOT·DIP·PEN IN INK
WHEN·USING BOW-PEN TURN·RULER OVER WITH·BEVELS·UNDERNEATH.

PLATE III

PLATE IV

A thin line alphabet of simple form.

These letters are easily drawn, being based, with only very slight deviations, on the forms shown in Plate I.

Its simplicity makes this alphabet particularly legible at close range, but the thinness of the strokes renders it unsuitable for all work which is intended to be read from any considerable distance.

A B C D E

F G H I J K

L M N O P

Q R S T U

V W X Y Z

PLATE IV

PLATE V

A heavier form of the alphabet shown in Plate IV. This is commonly known as the " block alphabet," its outstanding feature being uniform thickness of all strokes. Reference to the plate will explain the construction of letters likely to present difficulty.

The great merit of this form of lettering lies in its arresting clearness when viewed from a distance. Hence it is the most suitable form of lettering for many kinds of outdoor work, where finer lines and ornamentation tend to become obliterated by the action of weather.

PLATE V

PLATE VI

Small or *lower-case* letters to be used in conjunction with *upper-case* alphabets of Plates IV and V.

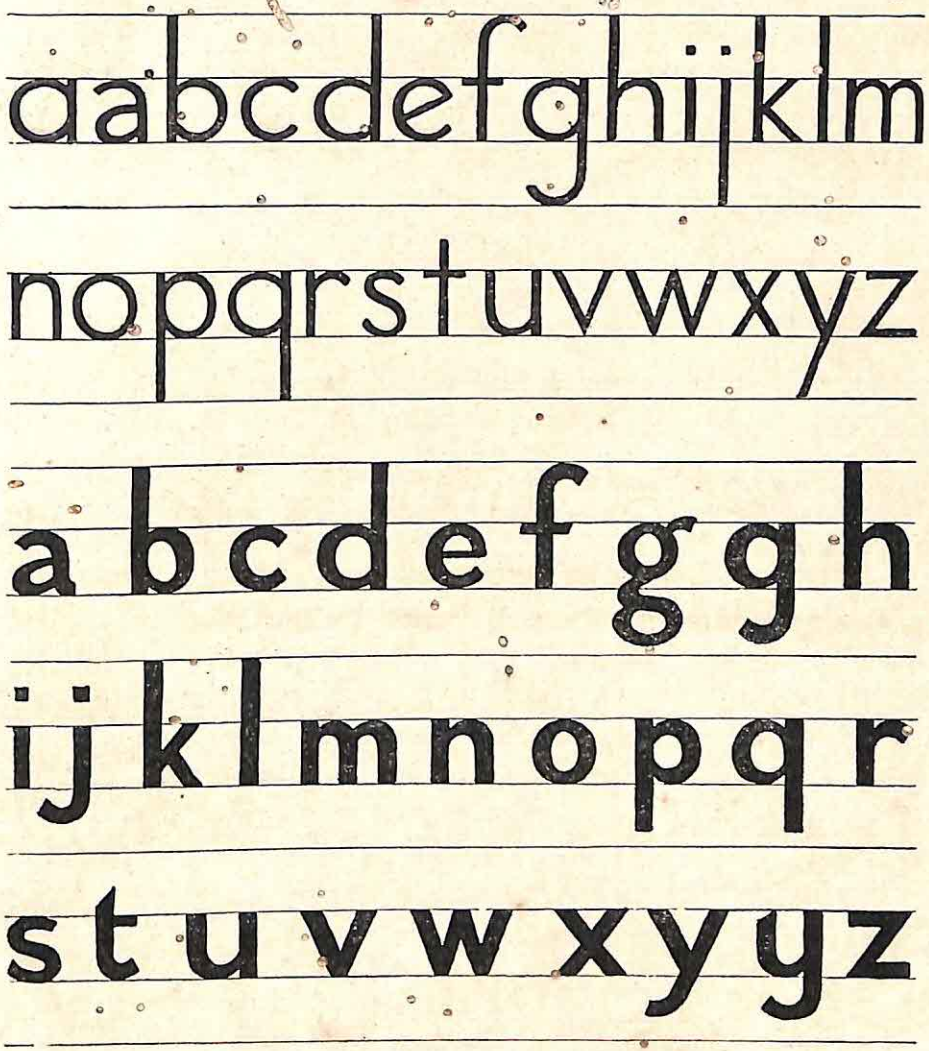

aabcdefghijklm
nopqrstuvwxyz
a b c d e f g g h
i j k l m n o p q r
s t u v w x y y z

PLATE VI

PLATE VII

The first step in elaborating the alphabets shown in the foregoing plates is to introduce variations in thickness. This usually proves a stumbling-block to the beginner, but if he will only bear in mind the action of the ordinary writing pen in making thick and thin lines he should experience no difficulty. Reference to the plate will remind him that all downstrokes, whether upright or oblique, must be thick, and all horizontal and upstrokes must be thin.

The letter O can be considered as a deviation from the square. Thus, going from A to B, we pass from horizontal (thin) to down (thick). From B to A′ we pass from thick to thin. To complete O we start again at A and proceed in the direction of B′ from a thin horizontal to a down thick stroke, and so on.

N.B.—The thickest part of the letter S *must* be at its centre, as shown.

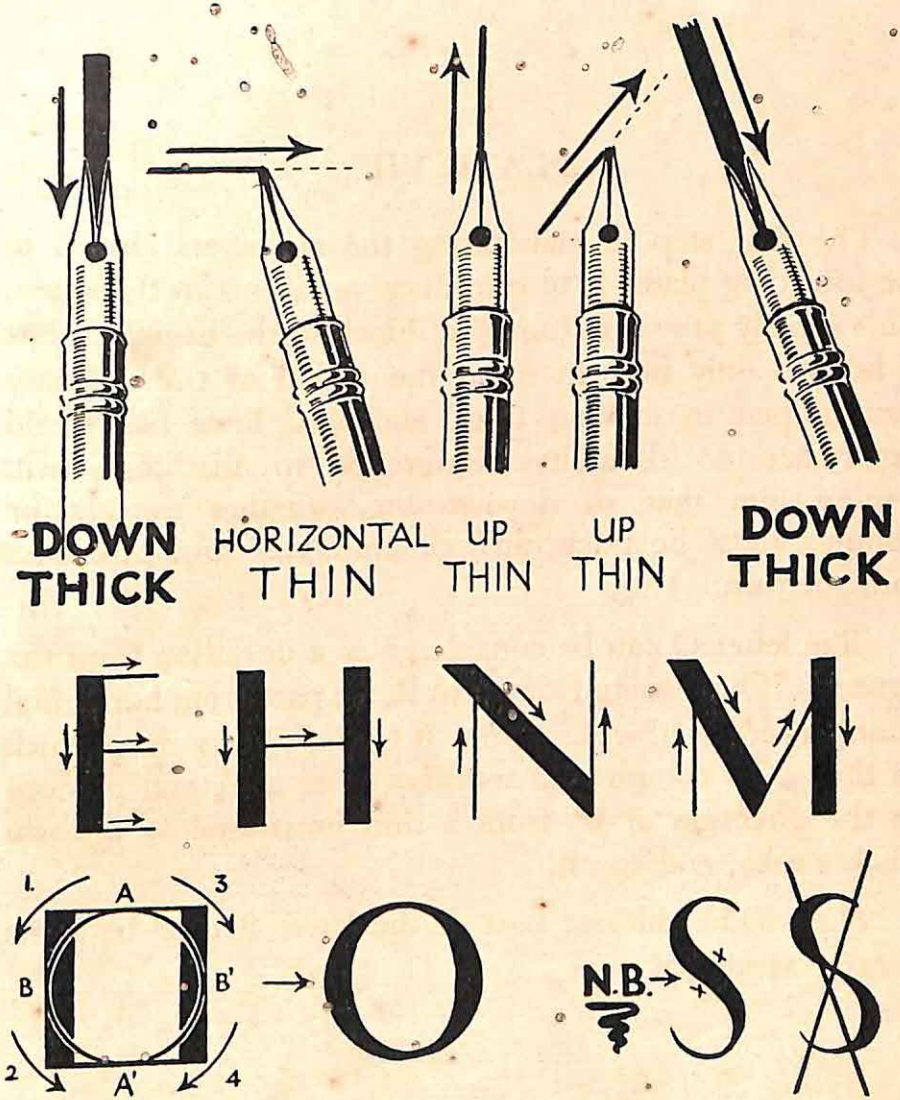


PLATE VII

Date 29.6.05
Acc. No. 11471

Library

PLATE VIII

This alphabet makes use of the thin and thick strokes explained in the previous plate, with the introduction of a simple finishing ornament to the strokes. Such ornaments are known as *serifs*.

The characters of this alphabet are bold like the block letters of Plate V, but decidedly more ornamental.

Note the form of the *serif*, which has a square end.

ABCDE
FGHIJK
LMNOP
QRSTU
VWXYZ

PLATE VIII

PLATE IX

A variation of Plate VIII. The outline only of the letter is drawn, and the inside can either be left blank or filled with shading, or colour. It should also be noted that the outline varies in thickness, producing an effect of slight relief. It is a convention in all such cases to imagine the source of light at the top left-hand corner. Hence the shadow (represented by a thicker outline) will fall on the *right* side of a stroke and also on the under side.

As the filling of the letters between the outline can be varied in many ways, this alphabet can be made very attractive without loss of characteristic boldness.

ABCDE
FGHIJK
LMNOP
QRSTU
VWXYZ

PLATE IX

PLATE X

Lower-case alphabet suitable for use in conjunction with Plate IX.

a b c d e f
g h i j k l
m n o p q
r s t u v w
x y z

PLATE X

PLATE XI

Numerals to correspond with alphabets shown in Plates IV, V, VIII, and IX respectively. Generally speaking, it is inadvisable to use differing types of letters and figures on the same notice, poster, showcard, etc., as a patchwork effect is thereby likely to result.

123456789

123456789

123456789

123456789

PLATE XI

PLATE XII

A further development in the elaboration of preceding forms, to give an effect of solidity.

The oblique lines from the angles or corners of the letters (to give an effect of thickness) are all at an angle of 45°.

In the case of the O the centre is moved downwards to the right, at an angle of 45°. Once the learner has mastered these four typical forms, the rest of the alphabet can be based on them.

With regard to these highly ornamented letters, the first essential is the good form of the letters themselves, as no amount of elaboration can ever convert bad letters into good ones.

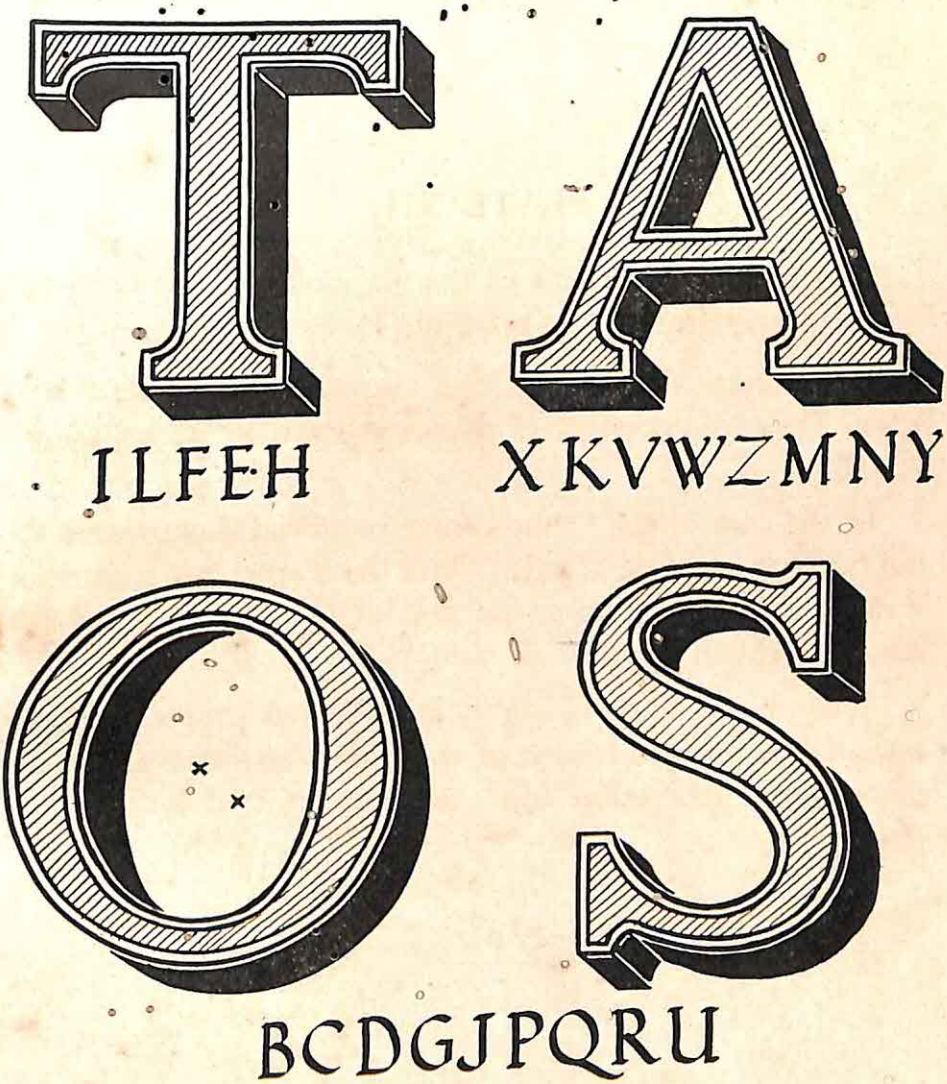


PLATE XII

PLATE XIII

The solid effect is here produced by shading, and the surface of the letter is represented as having a recessed centre.

The letters in this Plate and the preceding one are popular for signwriting over shop fronts. One seems to trace in these highly decorated letters used for this purpose a certain kinship with the old painted signs outside country inns.

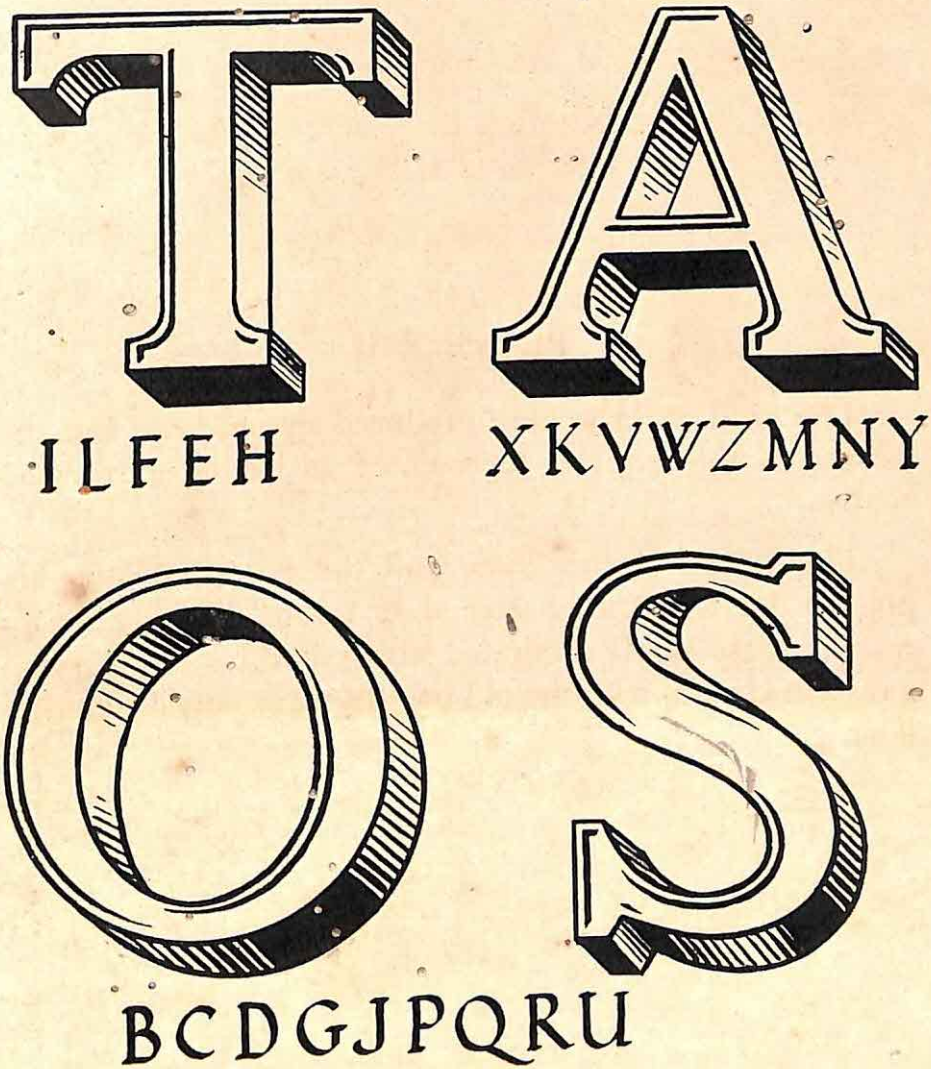


PLATE XIII

3—(E.1097)

PLATE XIV

Some useful borders and ornaments for use in conjunction with the alphabets in the foregoing plates.

While these are of undoubted value in giving finish to a notice, they must not be allowed to detract from the importance of the words with which they are combined.

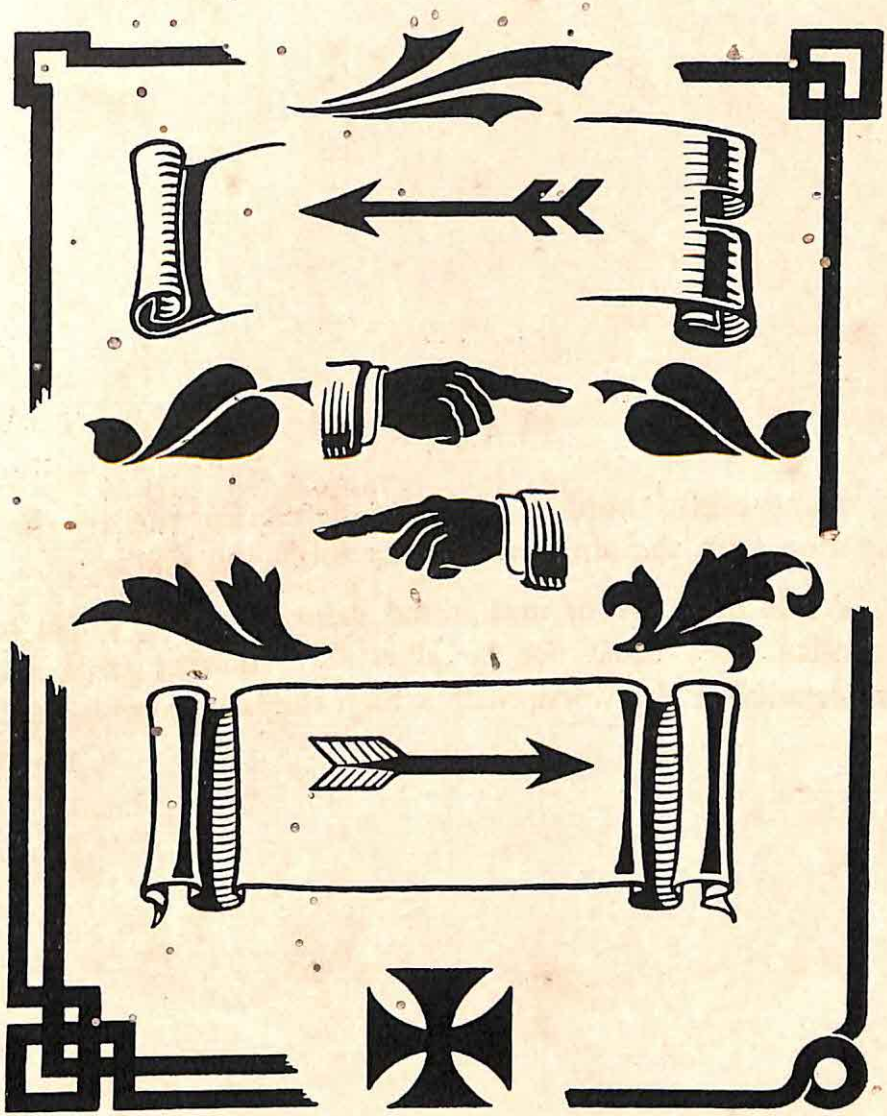


PLATE XIV

PLATE XV

The Trajan alphabet—the most beautiful of all alphabets—based on the letters inscribed on the Trajan column, Rome (A.D. 114).

Where beautiful lettering is required, no better model can be used.

The quiet dignity of these letters makes the alphabet eminently suitable for inscriptions, notices of a permanent nature, illuminated addresses, and for all purposes where a refined style of lettering is required.

ABCDEF
GHIJKL
MNOPQ
RSTUV
WXYZ

PLATE XV

PLATE XVI

In this plate the chief points in the construction of Trajan capitals are illustrated.

The letter O can have either a vertical or a slanted axis, but there must be uniformity of treatment in all letters based upon the O form.

Two types of *serif* are shown, and here again there must be uniformity of treatment.

The cross-bar of the letter A divides the letter into approximately two equal areas. The bar does not come half-way up the letter.

The letter M, always a difficult one to make, should be constructed as shown.

Care should be taken to make the horns of the C and G fall on the *outside* of the circle.

A variation of the letter S is often used, as shown in the plate. It gives a running effect, and hence is often called the " running " S.

If axis of "O" slants, then following letters must be modified to conform, thus:
BCDGPRQ
SERIFS
Pen made
SERIFS
Brush made
OR
OR
area "a", approx. area "b".
NOT
no angle here
Serif points to top of next letter
Construction of letter M

PLATE XVI

PLATE XVII

Pen-made capitals based on the Trajan alphabet. The outline of the letters should be drawn boldly with a pen, and then filled in with either brush or pen.

After a little practice this proves a very speedy form of lettering, and is therefore particularly useful for notices, tickets, etc., which require to be changed at frequent intervals.

ABCDEF
GHIJKL
MNOPQ
RSTUV
WXYZ

PLATE XVII

PLATE XVIII

A slightly less formal type of Trajan alphabet, very suitable for large lettering with brush.

The fact that it is less exacting than the traditional Trajan lettering, upon which it is based, facilitates its execution.

ABCDEF
GHIJKL
MNOPQ
RSTUV
WXYZ

PLATE XVIII

PLATE XIX

A *lower-case* alphabet suitable for use with Plates XV and XVIII.

abcdefg
hijklmn
opqrstu
vwxyz

PLATE XIX

PLATE XX

Caslon type, so called from the metal type designed by CASLON in the beginning of the eighteenth century.

It is the type from which modern print forms (good and bad) have been evolved.

Being based on type used for printing, it is a suitable alphabet for use where the demand for a limited number of copies does not justify the expense of setting up type.

ABCDEF
GHIJKL
MNOPQ
RSTUV
WXYZ

PLATE XX

PLATE XXI

A slanted form of Plate XX, usually known as the Italic type.

In copying this alphabet great care must be taken to preserve a uniform slope. It is a good plan in constructing these letters to place the T-square (see Plate III) at the same angle to the writing lines as the angle of inclination of the letters. The set square can then be used as usual.

ABCDEF
GHIJKL
MNOPQ
RSTUV
WXYZ

PLATE XXI

4—(E.1097)

PLATE XXII

Lower-case of Caslon type and Italic type, together with numerals suitable for use with either.

abcdefghijklmn

opqrstuvwxyz

abcdefghijklmno

pqrstuvwxyz

1234567890

PLATE XXII

PLATE XXIII

Pen-made Capitals.

These letters are very effective, and are very quickly drawn. There are many suitable forms of pen on the market, two only being illustrated in Plate III.

To the beginner, the pen at first seems clumsy and unwieldy, but it is no exaggeration to say that the pen really does the work.

The thick and thin lines are made by the varying direction of the pen—and NOT by pressure.

For show-card writing this form of lettering is becoming more and more popular.

ABCDEF
GHIJKL
MNOPQ
RSTUV
WXYZ

PLATE XXIII

PLATE XXIV

Another pen-made alphabet—more delicate in form and with slightly different *serifs*.

ABCDEF
GHIJKL
MNOPQ
RSTUV
WXYZ

PLATE XXIV

PLATE XXV

Two *lower-case* alphabets for use with capitals in Plates XXIII and XXIV respectively.

abcdefghijklmno

pqrstuvwxyz

abcdefghijklm

opqrstuvwxyz

PLATE XXV

PLATE XXVI

A very old traditional alphabet, usually associated with hand-written manuscripts. It is known as "black letter," and owing to its illegibility has largely fallen out of use. It has, however, a beauty of its own, and is easily written by direct strokes of a broad pen.

Because of its association with mediaeval times, notices, show cards, etc., intended to suggest antiquity, are often written in this style.

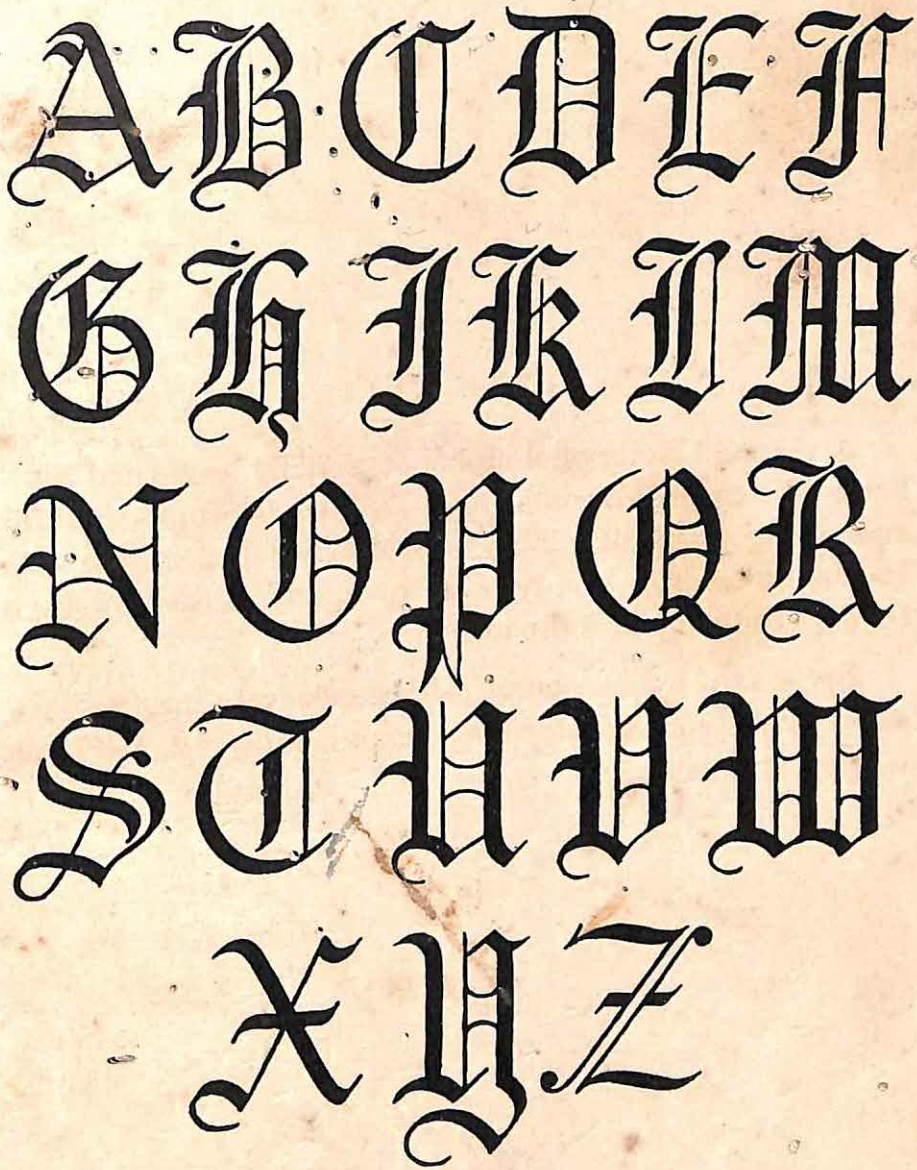


PLATE XXVI

PLATE XXVII

Lower-case and numerals suitable for use with Plate XXVI.

abcdefghi

jklmnopqr

stuvwxyz

1234567890

PLATE XXVII

PLATE XXVIII

Borders, ornaments, etc., made with a broad pen, and suitable for use with any of the broad pen alphabets.

A little practice on sectional or squared paper will reveal a multitude of variations.

The stems of letters are sometimes drawn out to form finishing ornaments, or to underline a word.

Some letters also can be linked together as in the word "Books."

These last two expedients should not be used too often, lest they become commonplace, and so lose their charm.

PLATE XXVIII

PLATE XXIX

Setting out Roman Letters Centrally in a Given Space

Owing to the difference of width of Roman letters, some little difficulty is often experienced in finding the centre of a word or words.

By counting 2 for wide, and 1 for narrow letters, one can easily find the centre. Having found this, start there and work to *right* (*a*). This distance marked to *left* of centre (*a'*) will roughly indicate the point of commencement of the line.

THESE MODERN HOUSES

2 2 1 1 1 1 2 2 2 1 1 2 1 2 2 2 1 1 1 = 28

28 ÷ 2 = 14

14 | 14

CENTRE

1st. STEP — ERN HOUSES — a

2nd STEP — THESE MOD — a′

3rd STEP — THESE MODERN HOUSES

PLATE XXIX

5—(E.1097)

PLATE XXX

Arrangement of words in an inscription is important. The most important words should stand out clearly and, as far as possible, lines should be arranged so that the words fall into natural phrases. It should be remembered in this connection that the reader has a natural inclination to pause at the end of each line.

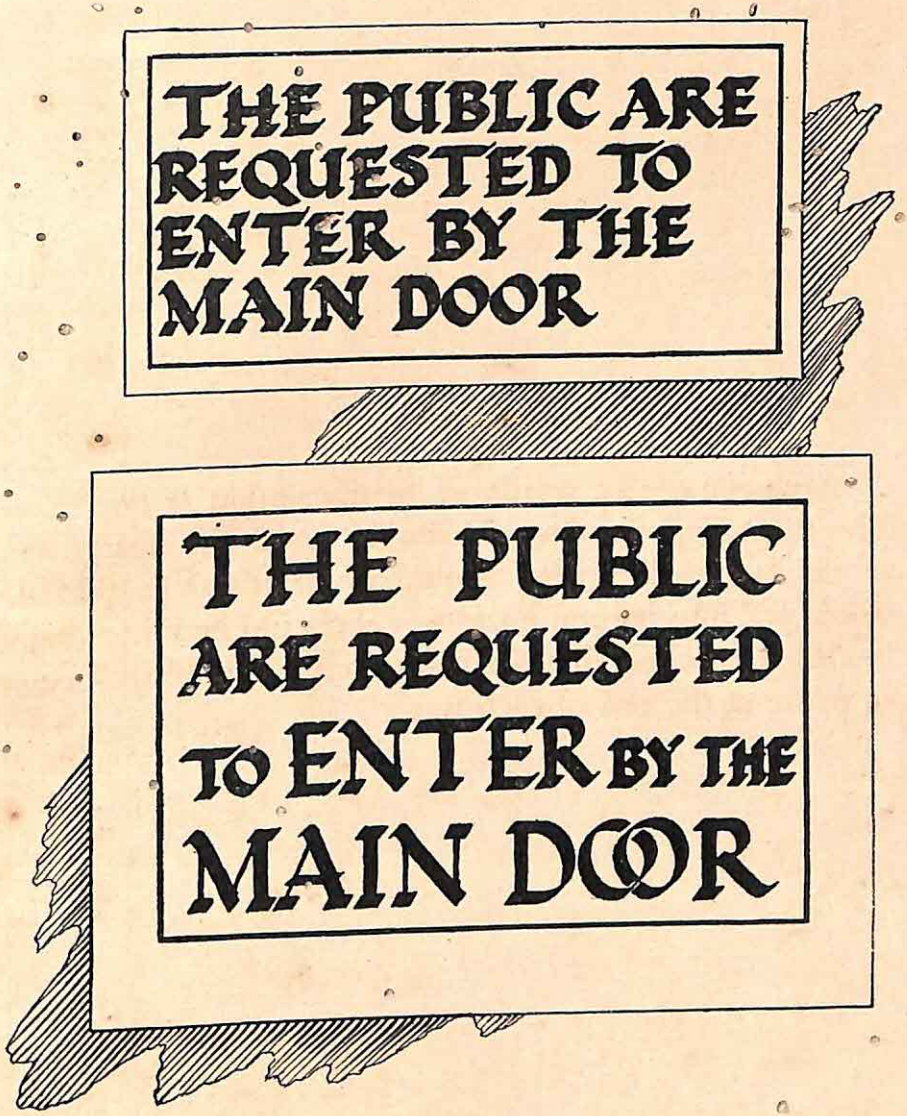

THE PUBLIC ARE REQUESTED TO ENTER BY THE MAIN DOOR
THE PUBLIC ARE REQUESTED TO ENTER BY THE MAIN DOOR

PLATE XXX

PLATE XXXI

In all lettering the mechanical equal spacing of letters sometimes leads to cramping, as in the first example shown. By slightly opening out spaces between the letters a better effect can be obtained. With a little experience the student will quickly detect and rectify this tendency to cramping.

BEGINNING

Too close

BEGINNING

The spaces between words sometimes fall almost under each other, thus giving rise to what appears to be a white line, running through the lettering. This is called a "river", & should be broken.

PLATE XXXI

PLATE XXXII

Lettering has a valuable decorative purpose, and this should be borne in mind in planning out notices, etc.

Avoid equal masses, which tend to monotony.

Remember that in any page of lettering the section which first catches the eye lies about one-third of the way down. The most important word or phrase of a notice should therefore, if possible, appear in this position.

Sometimes it is inexpedient to arrange lines of lettering centrally. In this case, deliberately start every line close up to the left of the writing space.

Margins are important, and the best arrangement is to have the top, side, and bottom margins in the proportion of 2 : 3 : 4.

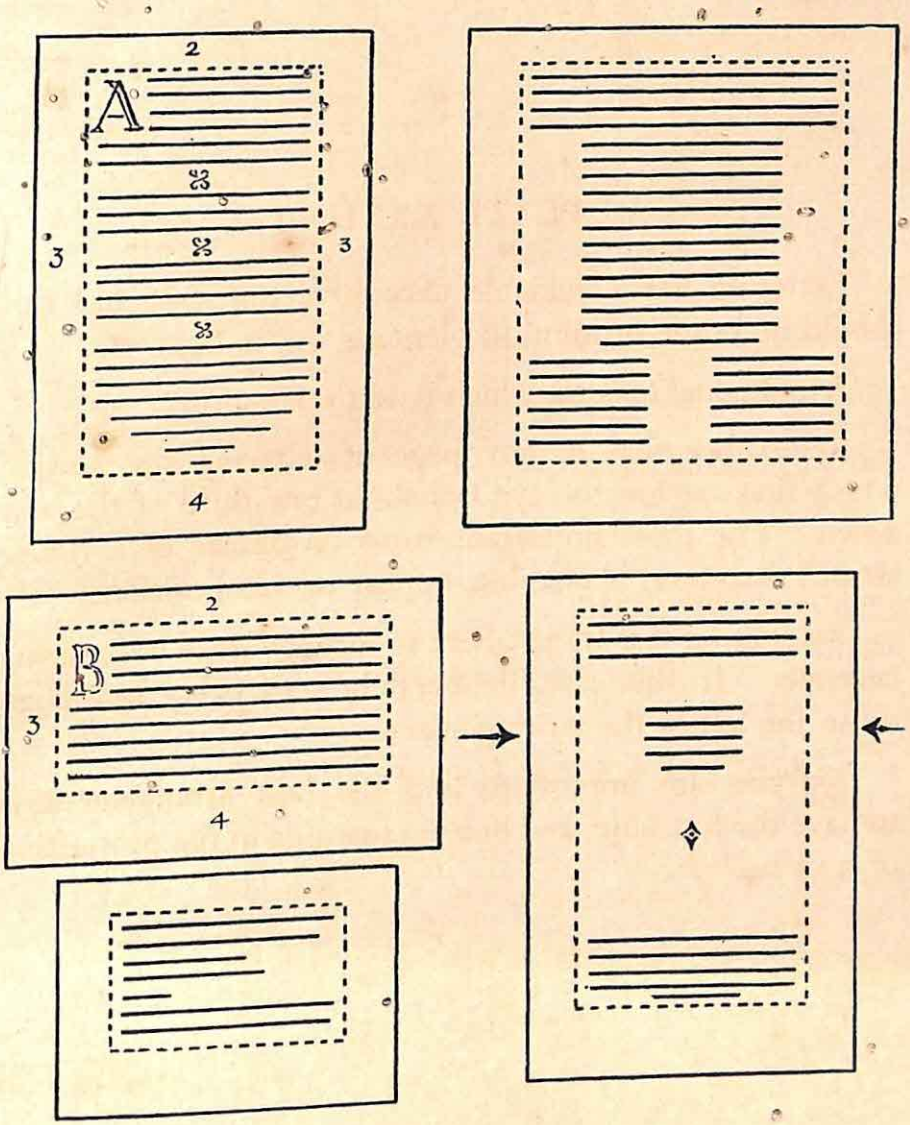


PLATE XXXII

PLATE XXXIII

Some little device, sketch, or design will often add greatly to the attractiveness of a business or show card. Some suggestions are here carried out.

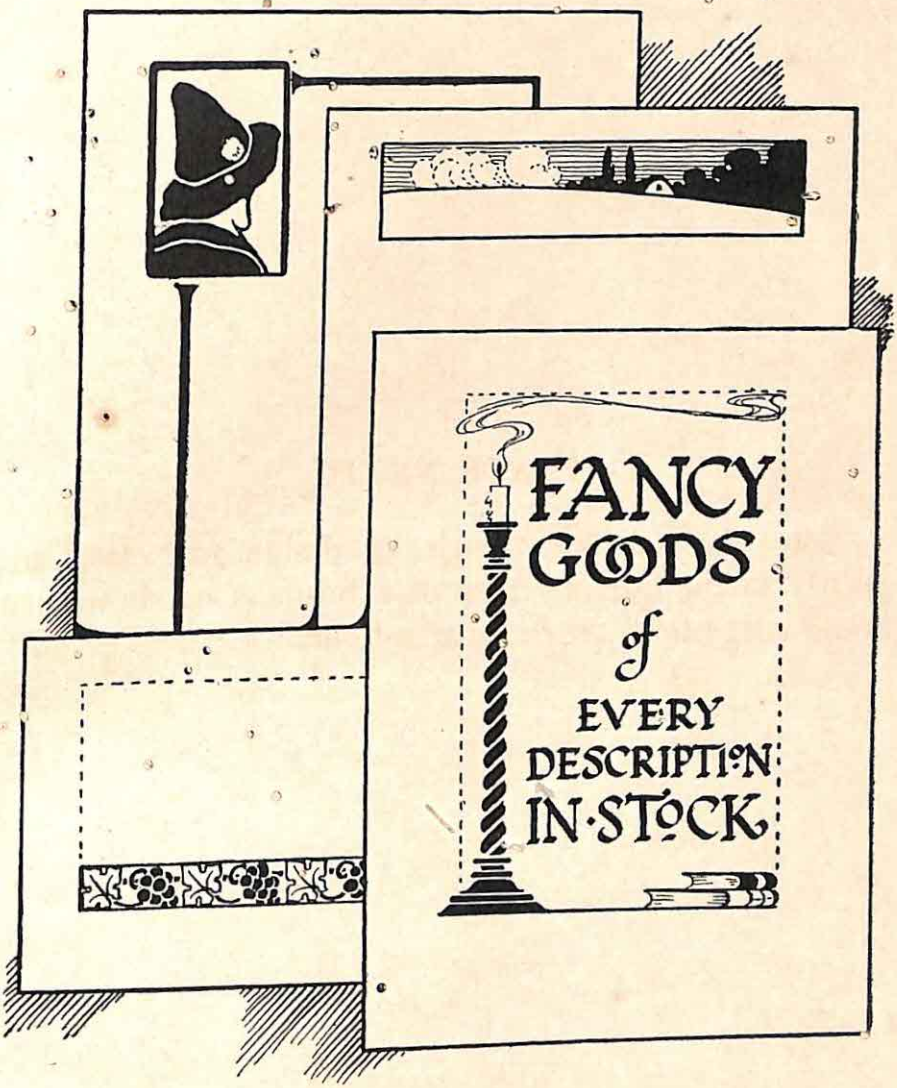


PLATE XXXIII

PLATE XXXIV

A few everyday objects treated simply and ornamentally. These could be used in business or show cards, catalogues, bill heads, etc.

PLATE XXXIV

PLATE XXXV

Method of indicating lettering on—

(1) Curved surfaces ;

(2 and 3) Receding surfaces.

This is one of the greatest stumbling-blocks of the would-be poster artist, but a careful study of the examples illustrated on this plate should enable him to overcome any difficulty likely to be encountered in this connection.

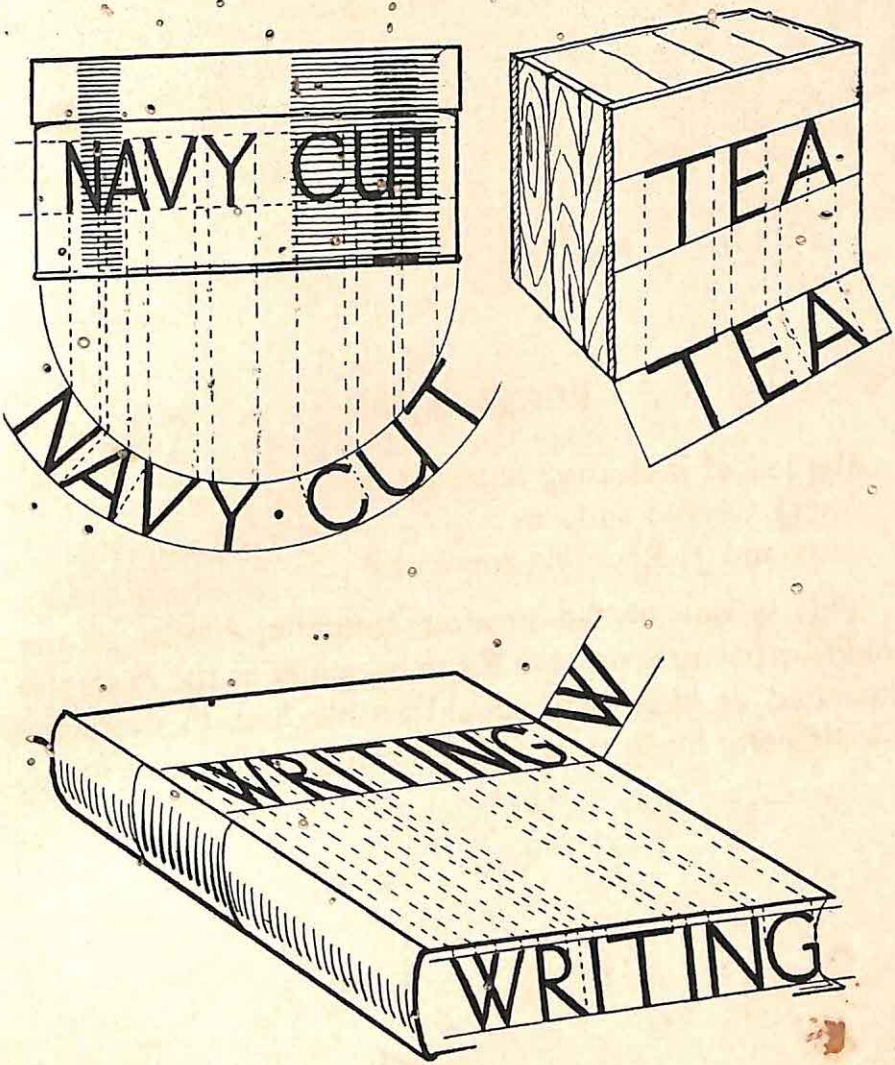


PLATE XXXV

PLATE XXXVI

Where a repetition of letters is necessary, the stencil letter has much to recommend it. These letters can be cut out of ordinary stiff paper—a sharp pointed knife, as illustrated in Plate III, being used. The cutting out should be done on glass or zinc to ensure clean-cut edges, and the finished stencil painted on both sides with "knotting" (obtainable at any oil merchant's) to preserve the surface from damage.

A stencil brush is necessary, and either water or oil colour may be used. The colour should not be too thin or moist, otherwise it will be found that it creeps under the stencil and spoils the sharpness of the edge of the letter.

ABCDEF
GHIJKLM
NOPQRS
TUVWXYZ
1234567890

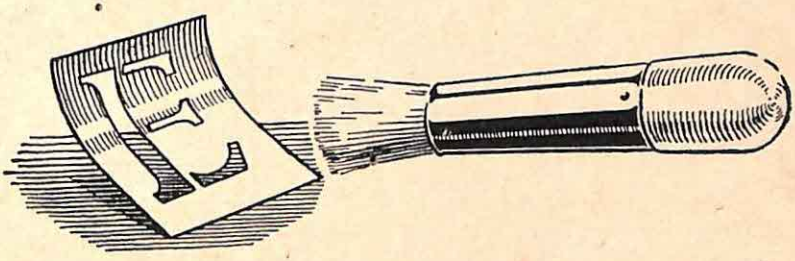


PLATE XXXVI

PLATE XXXVII

Stencilled ornaments and borders cut out in the same way as letters of Plate XXXVI.

A piece of paper can be used to mask (or cover) any unnecessary portions of the design in repeating.

Stencil designs can also be used in conjunction with ruled borders.

PLATE XXXVII

6—(E.1097) 12 pp.

PLATE XXXVIII

Gold lettering is very attractive, and is quite a simple process.

A bottle of Japan gold size and a book of transfer gold leaf form the necessary equipment.

The portion of the letter to be gilded should be coated with the gold size and allowed to dry until " tacky." The gold transfer is then pressed on to the prepared surface with the thumb, as shown in diagram.

The edges can be cleaned up with a soft brush.

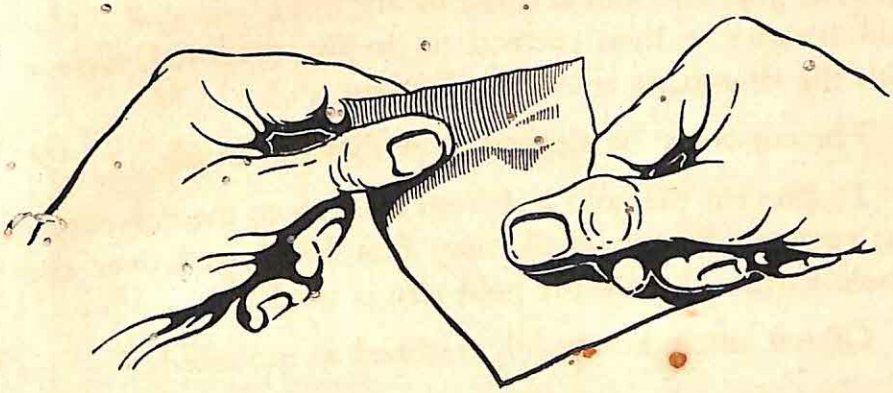
To prevent the gold leaf from sticking to the surrounding surface, French chalk may first be dusted over the whole surface, before the gold size is used.

Gilded letters are usually outlined as indicated.

GOLD

Type of letter suitable

Cleaning up the edge of gilded letter by brushing on to gilded surface



Method of applying gold transfer by pressure of thumb.

PLATE XXXVIII

PLATE XXXIX

A somewhat grotesque alphabet with no pretension to artistic value. It calls for little skill, and the letters are quickly produced. In some types of advertisement and magazine work it is very effective, and its convenience in ticketing goods will be readily appreciated.

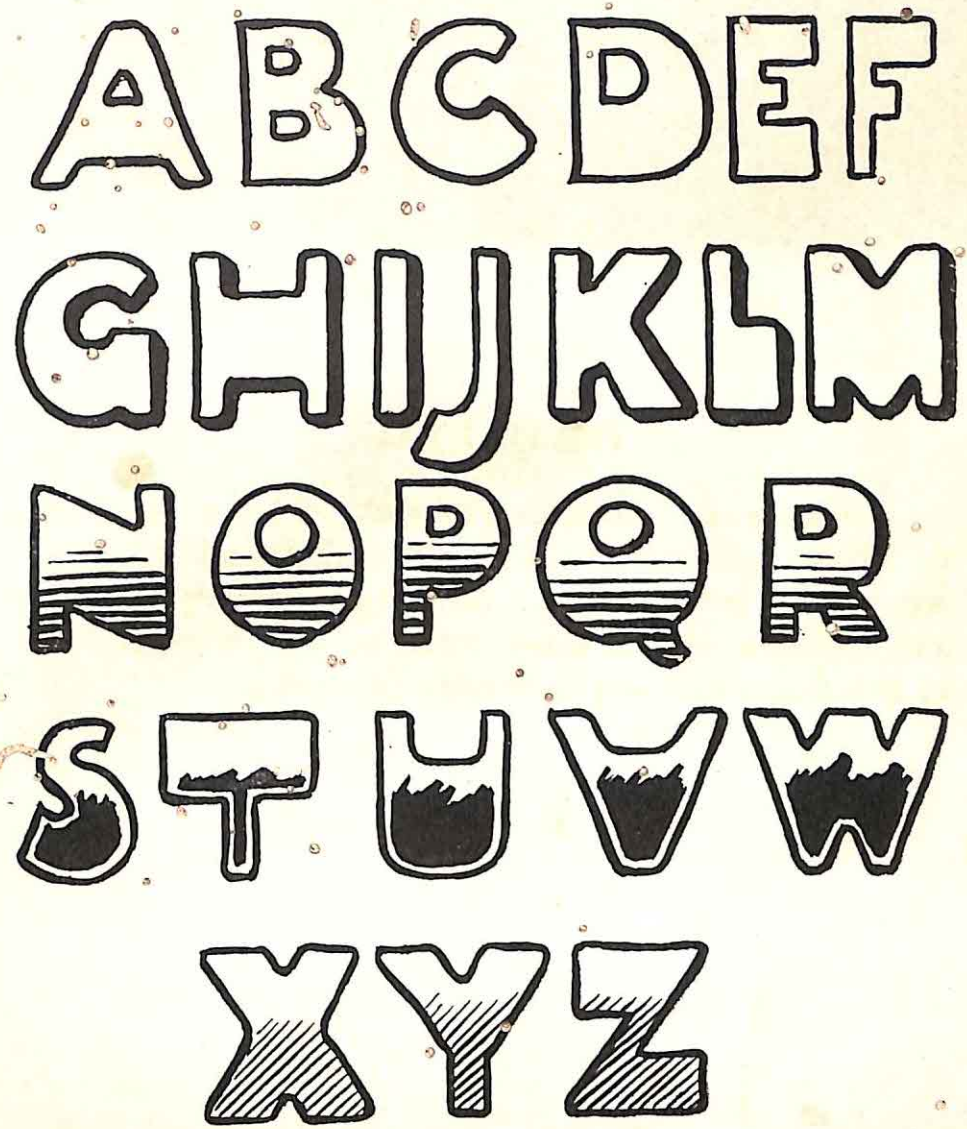


PLATE XXXIX

6A—(E.1097)

PLATE XL

An example of Trajan lettering applied to an inscription.

THERE · IS
MUCH · GOOD
ART
LOST TO THE WORLD
FOR · WANT · OF
A · LITTLE
COURAGE

PLATE XL

MADE IN GREAT BRITAIN AT THE PITMAN PRESS, BATH
C6—(E.1097)

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TO HIS MAJESTY
THE KING

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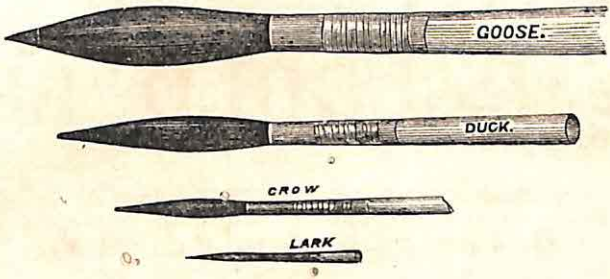

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